

California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection



AVIATION PROGRAM

In support of its ground forces, CDF fields an air force of airtankers, helicopters and airtactical planes. From 13 air attack and nine helitack bases located statewide, aircraft can reach most fires within 20 minutes. The airtactical aircraft fly overhead directing the airtankers and helicopters to critical areas of the fire for retardant and water drops. While both airtankers and helicopters are equipped to carry fire retardant and water, the helicopters can also transport firefighters, equipment and injured personnel.

NUMBER	TYPE	GALLONS CARRIED	MAX. OPERATING SPEED
AIRTANKERS			
23* <i>*One S-2T is stationed in Sacramento for maintenance relief.</i>	S-2T airtankers	1,200	235 knots (270 mph)
HELICOPTERS			
11* <i>*Two helicopters are stationed in Sacramento for maintenance relief.</i>	UH-1H Super Huey	320	110 knots (126 mph)
AIRTACTICAL AIRCRAFT			
14* <i>*One OV-10 is stationed in Sacramento for maintenance relief.</i>	Rockwell OV-10A airplanes		215 knots (247 mph)

The retardant used to slow or retard the spread of a fire is a slurry mix consisting of a chemical salt compound, water, clay or a gum-thickening agent, and a coloring agent. At nine pounds per gallon, an S-2T can carry 10,800 pounds.

CDF has completed an air modernization program that retrofitted newer S-2E/G aircraft. The retrofitted S-2E/Gs, referred to as CDF S-2Ts, are larger than their S-2A predecessors, have turboprop engines and 1,200 gallon retardant tanks. The final three S-2Ts were completed and delivered in 2005. As the new airtankers were delivered and placed in service the original S-2A's were retired.

All CDF helicopters are flown by CDF pilots. Airtactical planes and airtankers are flown by contract pilots.

The average annual budget of the CDF Aviation Program is about \$20 million. A total of 18 CDF personnel oversee the program with an additional 130 contract employees providing mechanical, pilot and management services to the program.

CDF's current support contractors are DTS Aviation Services, and Logistics Specialties Incorporated (LSI). DTS Aviation Services provides airtanker and airtactical plane pilot services, and all aircraft maintenance services. (All CDF helicopters are flown by CDF pilots.) LSI provides procurement and parts management services.